



NEWS RELEASE

LUBBOCK DISTRICT OFFICE

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Hearing Set for Small Business Owners to Comment About Excessive Federal Regulatory Enforcement

LUBBOCK, TX – Small business owners in the West Texas area concerned about excessive enforcement of federal rules can voice their complaints at a U.S. Small Business Administration Regulatory Fairness Board Hearing in Lubbock on Monday, January 31 from 8:30 a.m. to noon. The hearing will be held at Texas Tech University, Animal and Food Sciences Building, Room 101, Lubbock, TX 79401 (located on the southwest corner of Indiana Boulevard and Brownfield Highway).

SBA National Ombudsman Michael Barrera holds hearings around the country where business owners and representatives from trade associations can discuss openly, without fear of retaliation, their concerns about federal regulatory compliance practices.

“One of the biggest concerns small business owners face is unfair enforcement of federal regulations. They also worry about telling their stories because they fear retaliation by federal agencies,” Barrera said. “Small business owners want to play by the rules and comply with federal regulations,” he added, “and we want to encourage federal regulators to assist business owners with compliance rather than go straight to the penalty stage.”

Ombudsman Barrera’s office works closely with more than 35 federal regulatory agencies to resolve complaints about excessive enforcement of federal regulations. Information gathered from the hearing will be shared with federal officials in the Ombudsman’s annual report to Congress, and with managers of federal regulatory agencies to assist them with their enforcement actions.

The National Ombudsman’s authority to respond to comments on compliance issues is limited to federal regulatory enforcement matters and does not include concerns about obtaining federal contracts, regulations in general, or securing guaranteed loans.

Congress created the Office of the National Ombudsman through the Small Business Regulatory Enforcement Fairness Act of 1996. The act also established 10 regional fairness boards, served by 50 small business owners from across the country. The SBA Region VI Regulatory Fairness Board includes Texas, Oklahoma, Arkansas, Louisiana, and New Mexico. Members of the SBA Region VI Board are Jose Cuevas of Midland, Joseph Shepard of Dallas, Harold McAlpine of Arkansas, Mary Ann Weems of New Mexico, and Regina Hamilton of Louisiana.

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The West Texas hearing is open to the public. Those wishing to participate should contact Kay Lewis at SBA's Lubbock office at (806) 472-7462, extension 114 before the hearing. Should a small business owner or representative be unable to attend, written testimony may be sent in advance of the hearing to be included in the public record.

Comments and concerns about federal enforcement actions can be addressed directly to SBA Office of the National Ombudsman at 1-888-734-3247 (REGFAIR). For more information about the national ombudsman and this hearing, you may wish to visit the National Ombudsman's Web site at www.sba.gov/ombudsman.

For information on SBA's program and services in the West Texas area, call the Lubbock district office at (806) 472-7462, or (800) 676-1005 toll free. You may also visit the Lubbock district office Web site at www.sba.gov/tx/lubbock.

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The SBA helps small businesses each year with access to capital and credit through its financial assistance program, as well as providing technical training and business start up and expansion counseling, disaster loans for businesses and homeowners, and federal contracting and procurement assistance. For more information about the SBA go to www.sba.gov or call the SBA's Answer Desk at 1-800-U-ASK-SBA, or TDD 704-344-6640 for the hearing impaired.